

COMPARISON GUIDE - ITALY

1. EDUCATION LAW

A.) It's very hard to talk about consensus, as it depends on personal outlook, political opinion, the level of schools one is working in etc. It's true that Italy is changing its school system and its laws but it does not do it too quickly, so there is a lot of time to digest novelties and allow for some basic consensus.

B.) There are really a lot of laws, which are thorough-going, and if you are a headmaster you usually know them to quite an extent as you have to work with them. The most recent laws always ask for a lot of work! E.g. this previous year a law came out that asked from each school to make a three-year plan in advance for all the school projects and activities, based on a self evaluation that we had to put on a national web site. One can easily imagine that to produce these documents took a lot of time, reading, thinking, discussing etc. This summer we are asked to unit in nets of schools, which will have a say in things to be bought, in teachers' substitutes etc. So, there is always something to make you be alert, on the other hand there is also a lot of opportunities in this- provided, of course, that you are constantly well-informed and on the go.

2. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

It really depends. Parents are usually much more involved in lower grade classes- the primary school, for example. Yet the law asks the parents to be involved in class meetings twice a year in all school grades and there are parent representatives in all the highest school decisional bodies. So formally the parents and through them the community are present. For the other facilities it much depends on single schools, the rule usually being that the whole-day schools need more facilities than half-day schools. To notice, the high schools are all half-day schools, so they do not look at all like college campuses.

3. TEACHERS

The selection is tough and you enter after passing competition- exams, where you compete for a definite number of available places. You have to have a university degree but you are not specifically asked to master digital skills. The exam has a written and an oral part, where the communicative skills are clear. You are then put in a list and you can choose the school where you will teach according to the availability. So single school and their headmistresses have no say in this. They cannot choose who is going to teach at their schools! The new teachers enter permanently in the school system after one year and are evaluated by the single schools. Social prestige: I believe there is a definite social prestige in being a teacher, as you perform a useful public role. But on the other hand, the teachers' salary doesn't seem to match the years employed to become a teacher, so if the prestige is solely measured by income, it is not high.

4. STUDENTS

Italy doesn't have a great tradition in private schools. They are rare, many times present mainly in big cities, sometimes with a religious background and patronage. But these private schools are in fact also co-funded by the state. The state schools had

from the very beginning the function of standardising the varied regional realities and they still stress the national standards in education. Of course, for the private education parents need to pay more but there is no strict entrance selection. The most prestigious schools are still the state schools. In Italy we have some regions and some schools with a different teaching language - ours is e.g. Slovene in the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, while in the region of Alto Adige – South Tyrol, where the city of Bolzano is, the teaching language in many schools is German. Probably, the greatest effort nowadays for Italy is the school integration of many newcomers, who are immediately put into regular classes. The drop-out exists, especially in socially disadvantaged areas, yet there is a great, also financial effort, to try to diminish it, also in line with European aims and goals.

5. SCHOOL LIFE

Discipline is important but it is not over-evaluated. There is a precise code of behaviour, for both the students as well as the school staff, so it is not so difficult to follow it. Discipline is included in the mark that the students get for their behaviour and which is part of their yearly average grade.

6. SCHOOL AND WORKING

A: Last year Italy issued a law, which makes the students of the last three grades of the high school do 200 hours of working practice during a period of three years. These hours can be done during the school year or in the summer time. One of the main reasons is to allow the students to see how the work works and to connect to it more easily in their future life. We think that it is an important step toward a desired connection between the world of education and that of work.

B: The study orientation is supported by the national school authorities together with the city and regional boards but it is still the responsibility of the single schools to choose the appropriate orientation activities. We can say that the open days are now a regular practice at all levels of education and that we do a lot of activities for both the entering and the leaving students. Also their families require more and more information, being well aware of the many steps the young generation will have to do to enter the job market.